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Territorial Dimensions of the Romanian Parties

Elections, Party Rules and Organisations

ALEXANDRA IONAȘCU

The CEE histories have known numerous tides in instituting genuine electoral democracies. The rapid adoption of the representative rule and the myriad of new parties engaged in the electoral competition, soon after the fall of communism, were primarily conceived as trademarks in explaining political transitions. Aiming at creating closer links between the electorate and the political elites, shaping voters' allegiance to the national political system, the post-communist electoral processes were promoting strongly fragmentised and volatile party systems¹ described by the existence of blurred links with the civil society². Acting as public utilities³ and not as chains of representation, the newly emergent parties were mainly oriented towards patronage and clientelistic practices⁴, neglecting the development of local implantations or the consecration of responsive political leaders. Consequently, a non-differentiated political landscape was rapidly configured, conducing to volatile patterns of electoral support throughout the territorial units.

Processes often associated with the nationalisation of the party systems in Western democracies, accounting for the state building evolutions or the institutional arrangements, the uniform party electoral support in different regions/constituencies or the stabilisation of electoral swings over time⁵ were mainly linked to the decrease of salient cleavages within contemporary societies⁶, the governmental authority centralisation or the active leadership roles in shaping electoral preferences⁷. Traditionally, the analogous citizens' choices across electoral constituencies are connected to a change in the balance of power between centre and periphery,

¹ David OLSON, "Party System Consolidation in New Democracies of Central and Eastern Europe", *Political Science*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1998, pp. 432-464.

² Herbert KITSCHOLT, "Citizens, Politicians, and Party Cartelization: Political Representation and State Failure in Post-industrial Democracies", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2000, pp. 149-179.

³ Ingrid van BIEZEN, Petr KOPECKY, "The State and the Parties: Public Funding Public Regulation and Rent Seeking in Contemporary Democracies", *Party Politics*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2007, pp. 235-254.

⁴ Petr KOPECKY, "Political Parties and the State in Post-Communist Europe: The Nature of Symbiosis", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2006, pp. 251-273.

⁵ Daniele CARAMANI, *The Nationalization of Politics: The Formation of National Electorates and Party Systems in Western Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

⁷ Pradeep K. CHHIBBER, Ken KOLLMAN, *The Formation of National Party Systems*, Princeton University Press, 2004; IDEM, "Party Aggregation and the Number of Parties in India and the United States", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 92, no. 2, 1998, pp. 329-342.

the reconfiguration of governmental financial policies regarding regional party strongholds or to the transformations occurred in the national elite configurations¹. Nevertheless, little attention has been paid to the explanation of a similar phenomenon emerging in the new democracies.

Recent studies on party systems nationalisation in Central and Eastern Europe² revealed rather puzzling results. Although the level of nationalisation greatly varies in these new democracies, the highest levels of voting homogeneity seem to appear in countries considered to be more exposed to the re-emergence of visible cleavages³ such as the Czech Republic (0.89), Hungary (0.89), Slovenia (0.88), preserving lower levels in countries where ethnic divides are identifiable (Bulgaria (0.86), Slovakia (0.82), Lithuania (0.87))⁴. If in these post-communist countries, the modern history would suggest strong regional differences, the traces of "real socialism" that lasted almost half of a century and the weakness of the states pushed these frail political systems into electoral uncertainty. The high centralisation of the inherited state structure, the impressive electoral volatility⁵ and the rapid decrease in the citizens' mobilisation⁶ constitute some of the reasons for the surfacing of such territorial regularities.

Within this framework, Romania (and Bulgaria) displayed a rather idiosyncratic democratisation process. The particular features of the communist regime that repressed the liberalisation process in the 80s, the lack of distinctiveness between the regime and the Communist Party and the cult of personality recommended this case as an example of sultanism⁷. The absence of dissident movements during the communist decades able to articulate the regime change and party alternatives⁸, the outstanding membership records of the Communist Party which entrapped a considerable part of the Romanian society⁹ constitute some of the reasons for a slower transition and

¹ Mark P. JONES, Scott MAINWARING, "The Nationalisation of Parties and Party Systems: An Empirical Measure and an Application to Americas", Working paper #304 – February 2003, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, available online: <http://nd.edu/~kellogg/publications/workingpapers/WPS/304.pdf>, pp. 5-7 (last accessed on November 2011).

² The party system nationalisation and nationalisation of individual parties in this article are following the same methodological guidelines as provided by Daniel Bochsler. The indicator used to measure the degree of electoral homogeneity across the territorial constituencies was developed in "Measuring Party Nationalisation: A New Gini-based Indicator that Corrects for the Number of Units", *Electoral Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2010, pp. 155-168.

³ Herbert KITSCHLT, Zdenka MANSFELDOVA, Radoslaw MARKOWSKI, Gabor TOKA (eds.), *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation and Inter-Party Cooperation*, Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 157-195. See also Ingrid VAN BIEZEN, *Political Parties in New Democracies. Party Organization in Southern East-Central Europe*, Palgrave, Macmillan, Houndmills/Basingstoke, 2003.

⁴ Daniel BOCHSLER, "The Nationalisation of Post-Communist Party Systems", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 62, no. 5, 2010, pp. 807-827/p. 825.

⁵ Jan BIELASIAK, "The Institutionalisation of Party Systems in Post-communist States", *Comparative Politics*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2002, pp. 189-210.

⁶ Susan ROSE ACKERMAN, *From Elections to Democracy: Building Accountable Government in Hungary and Poland*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

⁷ Juan LINZ, Alfred STEPAN, "The Effects of Totalitarianism cum Sultanism on Democratic Transition: Romania", in IDEM, "Modern Nondemocratic Regimes", in *Problems of Democratic Transition & Consolidation*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996, pp. 344-366.

⁸ Vladimir TISMĂNEANU, *Reinventarea politicului. Europa Răsăriteană de la Stalin la Havel*, Polirom, Iași, 1997, p. 162.

⁹ The Romanian Communist Party displayed the highest membership rolls in the region. Daniel BARBU, *Republica absentă*, Nemira, București, 1999, pp. 46-57; IDEM, "The Burden of

drawbacks in the articulation of stable party systems. The late modernisation process¹ and the impact of the Communist Party's programmatic actions on homogenising the Romanian society² forecasted a non-distinctive political landscape. However, contrary to our expectations, the Romanian electoral development presents remarkable low levels of territorial uniformity (0.79). Although the ethnic fragmentation can partially account for these differences, as suggested at the level of the literature³, it is to be noticed that the share of the Hungarian population living in Romania (6.6%) is lower than in Slovakia (9.7%) and substantially inferior to the presence of Turks in Bulgaria (9.4%) or the total share of Lithuanian minorities (8% Russo phones, and 5.6% Polish according to the 2011 census). Conversely, the Romanian party system nationalisation score is rather similar to the other Baltic States – Latvia (0.75) and Estonia (0.77) – where according to the recent census, the Russians represent one quarter, respectively one third of the total population.

Without ignoring the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Romanian context⁴, this study considers the Romanian case as an atypical example of party system nationalisation. The lack of internal divides within society constitutes the perfect environment for political indistinctiveness and thus for the emergence of uniform electoral patterns. The defective political culture, the quest for governance and not representation⁵ theoretically impose a lack of political differentiation between territorial units or different logics in the electoral game (local or national elections). Still, the overall estimates concerning the party system nationalisation portrayed a divergent electoral development. In what follows, the article focuses on an in-depth analysis and explanation of voting behaviour patterns within the territorial units. The history of parties' divergent/convergent paths towards nationalisation during the post-communist period will be scrutinised by taking into account the electoral results in local (mayoral or County Council levels) and national contests (parliamentary elections). The second part of the research will pinpoint to the main political explanations for the low levels of party systems nationalisation. The Romanian paradoxical situation will be explored by mobilising the two alternative hypotheses regarding the importance of state regulations (party laws and electoral laws) but also by taking into account the organisational development of the Romanian political parties.

Politics. Public Space, Political Participation and State Socialism", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. II, no. 2, 2002, pp. 329-349; Stelian TĂNASE, *Elite și societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu Dej 1948-1965*, Humanitas, București, 2006, pp. 55-62.

¹ Daniel Louis SEILER, "Pot fi aplicate clivajele lui Rokkan în analiza partidelor din Europa Centrală", in Jean-Michel DE WAELE (ed.), *Partide politice și democrație în Europa centrală și de est*, Romanian transl. by Ramona Coman, Ana Maria Dobre, Dorina Iuga and Ninucia Pilat, Humanitas, București, 2003, p. 166. See also Daniel BARBU, *Politica pentru barbari*, Nemira, București, 2005.

² Pascal DELWIT, Jean Michel DE WAELE (eds.), *Le mode de scrutin fait-il l'élection?*, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, collection Sociologie politique, Bruxelles, 2000.

³ Daniel BOCHSLER, "The Nationalization of Political Parties: A Triangle Model applied on the Eastern and Central European Countries", *CEU Political Science Journal*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2006, pp. 6-37. See also IDEM, "It Is Not How Many Votes You Get, But Also Where You Get Them. Territorial Determinants and Institutional Hurdles for the Success of Ethnic Minority Parties in Post-communist Countries", *Acta Politica*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2011, pp. 217-238.

⁴ Daniel L. SEILER, "Pot fi aplicate clivajele lui Rokkan...cit.", pp. 170-171.

⁵ Daniel BARBU, *Politica pentru barbari*, cit., p. 5.

THE ROMANIAN PARTY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW

The post-communist party systems were mainly described as suffering of profound instability. The six general elections which were held in Romania after 1990 showed a continuous variation in the effective number of parties. Different analytical categories were rapidly applied as the system passed from one and a half party in 1990, to a multiparty system without dominant party in 1992-2000, 2004-2008, 2008-2012 and to a multiparty system with dominant party in 2000-2004¹. This continuous shift in the party system characteristics was initially balanced by an incipient bipolarisation founded on a political tension between post-communist parties and ex-communist parties². The firsts were claiming in the early 90s the interwar democratic legacy and dissident positions during the communist regime, while the latter were being labelled as successors of the Communist nomenclature, illustrating a success story of "redeemed communist inheritance"³. Additionally, an ethnic divide between nationalistic and the anti-nationalistic positions⁴ was rapidly configured, translated mainly as an opposition between the representatives of the main minority of the country: the Hungarians' leaders and some parties presenting extremist and anti-Magyar claims.

The choice of a highly inclusive electoral system in the early 90s, proportional representation with closed list in multimember constituencies, produced a highly fragmented political scene. The main outcome of these institutional arrangements was the inflation in the number of parties that registered their electoral lists in subsequent general elections: 71 (1990), 155 (1992), 75 (1996), 73 (2000), 64 (2004)⁵, 29 (2008). The adoption of complementary regulations or amendments: for instance higher electoral thresholds: 3% in 1992, 5% for parties and 8-10% for coalitions (after 2000)⁶ had a limited impact on diminishing the highly divided electoral scene, the new rhetorical scapegoat in explaining the lack of effective governance⁷. This inflation in the general number of parties is however misleading due to the presence of minority

¹ Cristian PREDA, "Système politique et familles partisans en Roumanie post-communiste", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. II, no. 2, 2002, pp. 555-579 / p. 557. See also Jean Michel DE WAELE, "Consolidare democratică, partide și clivaje", in Jean Michel DE WAELE (ed.), *Partide politice și democrație...cit.*, pp. 177-197.

² Cristian PREDA, "Les partis politiques dans le postcommunisme roumain", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. III, no. 4, 2003, pp. 943-987.

³ Anna GRZYMALA-BUSSE, "The Roots of Regeneration: Communist Practices and Elite Resources", in IDEM, *Redeeming the Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Parties in East Central Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, pp.19-69 (for the Romanian case see pp. 269-270). See also András BOZÓKI, John T. ISHIYAMA, "Introduction and Theoretical Framework", in IDEM (eds.), *The Communist Successor Parties of Central and Eastern Europe*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY, 2002, pp. 3-13.

⁴ Cristian PREDA, "Les partis politiques...cit.", p. 956.

⁵ Cristian PREDA, Sorina SOARE, *Regimul, partidele și sistemul politic din România*, Nemira, București, 2008, p. 78.

⁶ Cristian PREDA, "The Romanian Political System after the Parliamentary Elections of November 30, 2008", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. IX, no. 1, 2009, pp. 9-35.

⁷ Jean-Benoit PILET, Jean-Michel DE WAELE, "Electoral Reforms in Romania. Towards a Majoritarian Electoral System?", *European Electoral Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2007, pp. 63-79 / p. 77.

organisations, or the concentration of citizens' votes on the main political competitors (between 84.58% and 97.83% of the total share of the parliamentary seats)¹.

Despite of volatile party structures, the Romanian party system seemed to stabilise during the recent years. Alike other parties in the region, these political organisations suffered successive splits and fusions. From ten political parties that passed at least three electoral tests, three of them disappeared from Parliament in 2000 and another one failed in 2008 general elections. Moreover, one important member of the social-democratic family shifted from a leftist position towards centre-right ideological claims after 2000, and the main successor party changed its name four times. Ironically, the only party that can be considered rather consistent with its initial discourses and which conserved both the identity and organisation unchanged is not officially a party, but an organisational umbrella, ensuring the ethnic minority representation²: the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians. In what follows, the study will concentrate on the main Romanian parties that succeeded to preserve their organisation and to gain seats in public offices (although some examples of the other important parties for the post communist period will be mentioned): the liberals (PNL), the democrats/popular (PD/PDL), the social democrats (PDSR/PSD), the nationalists (PRM) and the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians (UDMR).

PARTY NATIONALISATION IN GENERAL AND EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

The shifting formulas of the party system and the continuous organisational change are far from being exceptional traits. The post-communist parties, rapidly confronted with a crisis of legitimacy³, had to reinvent themselves as they had to deal with political and party instability. Additionally, the visible decline in the electoral participation signalled the party failure in mobilising citizens' attention. In the first general elections held in Romania in 1990 – 86.19% of the citizens casted their votes for the selection of the new Parliament. Soon after, the turnout declined to 58.1% in 2004 and touched only 39.12% of the Romanian electorate in 2008 (and this, despite the adoption of a new electoral law meant to revitalise the voters' interest). The civic disengagement in relations to politics is even higher than in any other country in the region (see Table 1). The electoral turnout in the 2008 elections represented less than half of the electoral turnout in 1990. As suggested by Bochsler, an explanation for this dramatic drop lays in the decision to decouple the presidential and the legislative competitions. However, the figures remain ridiculously low even for the new democratic settings.

Testifying of a lack of interest in the electoral contests, the general turnout in the European elections confirmed the disengagement trends, institutionalising a convergent pattern with Western democracies where this type of scrutiny has been

¹ Cristian PREDA, "Système politique et familles partisanses...cit.", p. 561.

² Frances MILLARD, *Elections; Parties and Representation in Post communist Europe*, Palgrave, MacMillan, 2004, p. 235.

³ Mattei DOGAN, "The Erosion of Confidence in Thirty European Democracies", *Comparative Sociology*, vol. 4, no 1-2, 2005, pp. 11-54.

described as "second order national elections"¹. Only 29.46% of the Romanian voters presented themselves to the polls during the first elections for the EP (similar to the Bulgarian case – 28.6%), and 27.67% in the subsequent elections in 2009, considerably lower than the European average 43.24%, but comparable to the other countries in the region². Although a diverse society, with different cultural traditions, it appears that in what concerns electoral turnouts, there are no important differences between the territorial units. Considered to be a fundamental feature of the parliamentary regimes that abide more deeply by literal interpretations of representation³, the turnouts in Romania are convergent to more general processes that mark civic disenchantment with politics. (See Table 2).

The widespread phenomenon of absenteeism gradually developed in all the constituencies, following a parallel process, concerning the rising uniformity in the party electoral support across the territorial units. When looking at the first ten years after the fall of communism, parties' electoral results greatly varied throughout the country. Although displaying lower levels than other CEE countries, the party system nationalisation score gradually increased from 0.65 in the early 90s up to 0.79. The decision to introduce a mixed electoral system in 2008 in which the individual competitors have the opportunity of being directly elected in their colleges (if they had gathered more than 50% of the votes) did not substantially alter these voting patterns. The votes casted at the constituency level seem to obey the same uniformity rule, suggesting a reduced role of personal voting.

These analogous electoral patterns can also be depicted in the cases of individual parties. Despite of high variations in the electoral behaviour during the last 20 years, the main Romanian parties' nationalisation scores registered high values. Given this premature phenomenon, the homogenisation of the electoral support is not an expression of the rapid party reach within the territorial units but rather a sign of failure in developing strongholds. Consequently, there is no surprise that the social democrats, inheriting the powerful organisational structures of the former Communist Party⁴ or the PRM, the Romanian nationalist party (displaying however successor elements inherited from the communist past⁵) were the main competitors exhibiting lower levels of party nationalisation than the newly created right wing parties. However, when focusing on parties "that counts" for the Romanian transition, only two main competitors show reduced levels of nationalisation: CDR and UDMR. In the first case, Romanian Democratic Convention represented a coalition of parties that dominated the anticommunist partisan scene after 1989. After 2000, following a

¹ Karlheinz REIF, "European Elections as Member State Second-Order Elections Revisited", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 31, no. 1-2, 1997, pp. 115-124. See also Michael MARSH, "Testing the Second-Order Election Model after Four European Elections", *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1998, pp. 591-607.

² The turnouts in CEE were remarkably low in the EP's elections: Slovakia (19.63), Lithuania (20.54) Poland (24.53), Slovenia (28.02), Czech Republic (28.22). With slightly higher score: Hungary (36.28), Bulgaria (37.49), Estonia (43.90). The only country that registered turnouts above the European average: Latvia (52.57%).

³ Norman SCHOFIELD, Itai SENED, *Multiparty Democracy. Elections and Legislative Politics*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, pp. 1-9.

⁴ Lavinia STAN, "Romania: In the Shadow of the Past", in S.P. RAMET (ed.), *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 383.

⁵ Daniel Louis SEILER, "Pot fi aplicate clivajele lui Rokkan...cit.", p. 171.

governing period, the coalition preserved only limited levels of support, mainly in the Western part of the county. The electoral decline, but also the liberals' decision to run independently in the elections, resulted in a significant drop of the party nationalisation score. In the second case, the UDMR's ethnic votes explain the low levels of party nationalisation. Besides these two main examples partially accounting for the low levels of party system nationalisation during the 90s, several other post-communist competitors illustrate reduced levels of nationalisation. These ephemeral nationalistic and left wing oriented parties disappeared after 2000. Considered to be as the main challenger to the Hungarian minority rights, PUNR was initially created as a regional party that embraced nationalistic discourses. The party that succeeded to gain representation in Parliament during the first three post communist elections had set its primary objective to fight against extensive minority rights. Consequently, PUNR's electoral support depended on the geographical display of the Hungarian minority determining low levels of nationalisation (around 0.6 in 1992 and 1996). Correspondingly, the Socialist Labour Party (PSM) won 13 mandates in the Lower Chamber of the Romanian Parliament in 1992 but displayed a nationalisation score of only 0.67.

Seemingly, in the Romanian case, the PR formula encouraged low levels of party nationalisation. By the same token, the electoral law favoured the political competitors that disposed of uniform electoral support throughout the country. With the exception of the ethnic party, the political competitors that failed to nationalise their votes disappeared from the parliamentary map. The main parties' high levels of party nationalisation seem to suggest: (1) the inability of the newly emergent organisations to reinforce a party electoral geography based on strongholds, (2) the citizens' tendency to cast votes according party labels and not candidates' characteristics. The high levels encountered in the turnout nationalisation index imply the existence of political indistinctiveness installed within territory, regardless of historical and cultural specificities.

NATIONALISATION AND LOCAL ELECTORAL COMPETITIONS

Following a liberal tradition concerning the separation of powers which also implies a territorial dimension (the division between central and local government), the local elections are ways for citizens to directly select their decision-makers. At the same time, local elections allow territorial communities to philologically and socially individualise their capacity of self-government¹. Illustrating the historical differentiation between centre and periphery, even in hyper-centralised states, the local electoral processes follow different logics of citizenships and are meant to censure and reveal other dimensions of politics. More exposed to public accountability due to the proximity between the officeholders and the public, described by the "interplay between politics and administration", the local level discloses different facets in the articulation of political representation².

¹ See Y. MENY, V. WRIGHT (eds.), *Centre-Periphery Relations in Western Europe*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1985; A. DELCAMP, *Les institutions locales en Europe*, PUF, Paris, 1990.

² Kristof STEYVERS, Tomas BERGSTRÖM, Henry BÄCK, Marcel BOOGERS, José Manuel Ruano DE LA FUENTE, Linze SCHAAP, "From Princeps to President? Comparing Local

In the Romanian case, the hyper-centralised tradition of the Communist state dismantled the sense of local community, by practicing a monopolistic interpretation of the country's territorial structure¹. The popular councils formed by directly elected deputies in single member constituencies selected among themselves the members of executives councils and their structure of leadership (at county, city, village levels). Nevertheless, even these indirect forms of election were bogus as the selected persons needed the approval of the superior political bodies in order to occupy their offices. Presidents of the executive councils were also mayors of the territorial units². The inherited structure of the local administration was preserved after the fall of communism, although new regulations publically announced the introduction of decentralisation³. The post-communist period was mainly described by the continuity of administrative centralism of the socialist state, this time with the extreme multiplication of political actors⁴. Accordingly, the local administration system was articulated on three layers: local, county and regional (even if the latter remained rather a fictional entity, without disposing of a proper administrative apparatus). Instead the two other strata were articulated on a symmetrical logic with the national administration⁵ comprising deliberative bodies (County or Local councils) and executive positions (mayors, and starting with 2008 County presidents).

Following the representativeness ideal imposed in all the new democracies, the local administrative reform was doubled by a change in the electoral procedures. Although the direct elections of mayors are far from being the rule in the Western European countries, almost all the post-communist countries had embraced this electoral system. The only exceptions are the Czech Republic and Latvia that opted for the indirect elections of mayors. In the Romanian case, the indirect election of local authorities was partly abandoned immediately after the fall of communism, first by adopting the two-round majority system for the selection of mayors and the PR on closed list for local councilmen. Starting with 1996, the County Councils are also directly elected on a PR basis. As in the case of general elections an additional threshold was introduced in the 2000 elections meant to stop the fragmentation of the local political scene. The quest for more local accountability and political transparency pushed even further the electoral reforms. Since 2008 the presidents of the County Councils are directly elected following a one round majority system (following the examples of mayoral elections in Slovakia and recently in Hungary). The rapid rejection of the communist electoral system was motivated, as in the national elections, by the pursuit of leadership legitimacy. The subsequent electoral reforms that doubled the national experience imposed however within the local units heteroclitic logics in the selection of representatives: (1) more political accountability due to the introduction of direct forms of selection, and (2) less inclusiveness resulting from legal thresholds.

Political Leadership Transformation", *Local Government Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2008, pp. 131, 134. See also John STEWART, *The Nature of British Local Government*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000, p. 43.

¹ Cristian PREDA, Sorina SOARE, *Regimul, partidele și sistemul politic...cit.*, p. 50.

² According to the Law no. 57, 26th of December 1968 regarding the organization and functioning of popular councils, *Official Journal*, no. 168/26 Dec. 1968.

³ Cristian PREDA, Sorina SOARE, *Regimul, partidele și sistemul politic...cit.*, p. 52.

⁴ Daniel BARBU, *Republica absentă*, cit., p. 105.

⁵ Cristian PREDA, Sorina SOARE, *Regimul, partidele și sistemul politic...cit.*, p. 52.

The majority and the proportional logics both present in these elections produced rather conflictive situations than civic engagement. With the exception of the last scrutiny, the turnouts in local elections remained lower than in the parliamentary race. In 1992, 65% of the citizens participated to selection of their local representatives. Since then, the turnout remained stable around 50% of the adult population (56.47% [1996], 50.85% [2000], 54.23% [2004], 50.65% [2008]). Although the local elections should raise more interest on the behalf of voters directly affected by the local policies, they remained, in this case, rather second order elections (see Table 3). The electoral volatility, the disproportional seats allocation mechanism and the fragmented nature of party politics are also describing the local political scene. In the 1996 elections 136 electoral competitors (19 electoral alliances, 33 minority unions) presented lists in different counties, whereas in 2008, the number dropped to 51 (from which 9 electoral/local alliances, 18 minority representatives). As in the case of national politics, the progressive stabilisation of the local party systems was doubled by moderate tendencies towards the concentration of votes on the main political competitors. For instance, if in average 61.31% of the mandates for the County councils were occupied in 1996 by the representatives of the parliamentary parties, this percentage increased up to 69.74% in 2000, 85.82% in 2004 and 84.57% in 2008. Correspondingly, until 2000, in the mayoral elections the percentage of the parliamentary parties' representatives remained below 70%. In 2004 a substantial change was registered as 93.02% of the mayoral mandates were allocated to the parliamentary parties (85.52% in 2008).

At a first glance, the local elections in Romania reproduce similar trends with the national party behaviour. The absence of nationwide party linkages and the lack of local democratic traditions should be conducive to a homogenisation of voting behaviour in these locally focused electoral processes. Following the idea that the PR elections should encourage more territorial uniformity than in the case of majority elections, the nationalisation scores (calculated on the aggregate data at the county level) should however express lower regularities in the mayoral elections than in County Councils elections. Indeed, until 2008 this seems to be the general trend. Both in the case of the County Council elections and in mayoral elections there is a clear pattern of nationalisation of electoral choices. Although with lower values than in the general elections in the early 90s, as expected, an indisputable process of homogenisation of electoral support can be depicted, even in these local races. Within this framework, the 2008 electoral process is rather puzzling. The mayoral electoral results that should rather impose personal voting, given the personalisation of performances in conducting local affairs, displayed higher levels of nationalisation than in the case of County Councils. Two alternative explanations can be formulated in this regard. First, these electoral outcomes can be linked to the public discourse claiming the necessity of a political coherence between the governing coalition's colour and the mayors' political affiliation. During the last ten years, the governing parties' patronage strategies, targeting the cooption of former proficient mayors as candidates for the next elections, forced the electoral results' alignment in national and mayoral competitions. In this scenario, the local party system nationalisation process would result from a political adjustment meant to maximise the chances of the territorial units to access state resources. The widespread political migration of mayors¹ (although formally forbidden by law since 2006) became a general practice

¹ Several reports underlined this phenomenon : "Migrația politică în administrația locală la un an de la alegerile locale din 2000: Studiu la nivelul primarilor", *Public Policy Institute*, 2001

in the years 2000, explaining thus the rapid electoral convergence from that point on. It appears that the contextual factors and the configuration of party strategies weighted more than the electoral laws' provisions in determining the territorialisation of politics. The alternative explanation which was publically advanced in order to explain this atypical situation refers to the institutional factors and the 2008 electoral reform. Considering that the redistricting process for the national elections took into account the previous electoral performance of mayors, the convergence between mayoral and legislative elections has been considered a sign of gerrymandering.

Despite of a certain number of common features, different logics still subsist in national and local electoral competitions. In the beginning of the 1990s, parties created local alliances prior to the electoral scrutiny without necessarily reproducing the national leaders' choices. During the recent years, the political parties adopted similar political strategies only following the local elections in order to allow the creation of majorities in the newly elected Local and County Councils. In this manner, local and county council coalitions emerged that reunited parties from the governmental coalition with parties from the opposition¹. These initial coalitions remained effective even after the general elections introduced other majorities, diverting or reconfiguring (in theory at least) the burden of accountability and the distribution of negative voting in local elections. Nevertheless, when observing the party nationalisation scores (Table 5) the regularity of the voters' choices across the territorial units is quite obvious. Alike general elections, the local competitions produce party nationalisation scores that are influenced by a myriad of parties some of them disposing of very low levels of party nationalisation (for instance PUNR which in 1996 disposed of a nationalisation score touching 0.44). The mayoral elections allow however the identification of distinctive traits for the comprehension of the electoral behaviour homogenisation. The individual party nationalisation scores displayed rather lower scores (especially in 2004) than in the case of County council elections (see Table 5). In almost all cases, these differences cannot be accounted for without taking a closer look to parties' strategies and internal reconfigurations.

DETERMINANTS OF THE TERRITORIAL HOMOGENEITY IN THE ROMANIAN CASE

The first post-communist elections reflected high inequities between the registered political competitors: on one side, the successor parties, inheriting the structures of the former communist party, on the other the newly emergent parties with no financial means or organisational structures able to compete in all the territorial units².

available online <http://partide.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/migratia.pdf> (last accessed on December 2011); "Migratia politică în administrația locală la un an de la alegerile locale din 2004: Studiu la nivelul primarilor între demagogie și lipsa voinței politice autentice", <http://www.ipp.ro/old/altmateriale/migratia%20primarilor%202005.pdf> (accessed on December 2011). See also Cristian PREDA, Sorina SOARE, *Regimul, partidele și sistemul politic...cit.*, p. 57.

¹ For such examples in 2004 see CASP Report, "Local Elections 2004: A Turning Point in Romanian Politics", Bucharest, 2004, <http://alegeri.ong.ro/raportCASPEnglish010904.pdf> (last accessed on December 2011).

² E. FODOR, E. HANLEY, "Left Turn in Post-communist Politics: Bringing the Class back in?", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 11, 1997, pp. 190-224; S. WHITE, J. BATT,

These discrepancies were less visible in some of the CEE countries as compared to Romanian political landscape where the first genuine governmental turnover took place in 1996. Paradoxically, the unbalanced contest between the political forces and the hegemonic position of the successor party factions' were not transposed in high discrepancies in the electoral support throughout the territory. The historical parties' nationalisation scores displayed values that were even higher than the ones of the newly (re)born social-democrats. This situation can be traced back to the communist heritage. Nevertheless, the gradual increase in the party system nationalisation in the Romanian case suggests the possibility of other post-communist factors conducive towards the homogenisation of the electoral behaviour across constituencies such as the electoral system and the party organisational development¹.

Political Institutions, Party Regulations and Electoral Outcomes

Political institutions and electoral regulations have been known to hinder or facilitate via direct or indirect effects political representation². Immediately adopted after the breakdown of communism, the PR electoral formula responded to several ideals: (1) the discontinuity with the communist past (when elections were held following one round majority principle in single-member constituencies)³, (2) the continuity with the interwar tradition which was perceived as the golden age of democratic behaviour in the Romanian history⁴, (3) the emergence and consolidation of party pluralism conceived as congruent to the democratic frameworks⁵, and (4) the representation and pacification of conflicts resulting from the ethnic divided structure of the country⁶. Since then, as already mentioned in the previous sections, the highly inclusive electoral system for the parliamentary elections suffered numerous reforms evolving towards majority effects (see Table 6). The "proportional non-representativeness"⁷ of the Romanian electoral system influenced by the electoral

P.G. LEWIS, (eds.) *Developments in Central and East European Politics*, Palgrave, Macmillan, New York, 2003.

¹ First suggested by Daniel BOCHSLER, "The Nationalization of Political Parties...cit.", see also Ingrid VAN BIEZEN, Daniele CARAMANI, "The Nationalization of Party Systems in Central and Eastern Europe: Trajectories, Conditions, Outcomes", paper presented at the *ECPR Joint Sessions*, Rennes, 11-16 April 2008.

² Russell J. DALTON, Christopher J. ANDERSON, "Nested Voters: Citizen Choices Embedded in Political Contexts", in IDEM (eds.), *Citizens, Context, and Choice. How Context Shapes Citizens' Electoral Choices*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 242.

³ Alexandra IONESCU, *Du Parti-État à l'État des partis. Changer de régime politique en Roumanie*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2005, p. 239.

⁴ Marina POPESCU, "Romania: Stability Without Consensus", in S. BIRCH, F MILLARD, M. POPESCU, K. WILLIAMS (eds.), *Embodying Democracy: Electoral System Design in Post-Communist Europe*, Palgrave, New York, 2002, pp. 90-109.

⁵ Jean-Benoit PILET, Jean-Michel DE WAELE, "Electoral Reforms in Romania...cit.", pp. 63-79.

⁶ D. HOROWITZ, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, University of California Press, CA, 1985, pp. 293, 303; H. TUSAN, "Ethnoregionalist Parties as Ethnic Entrepreneurs", in L. WINTER, H. TUSAN, (eds.), *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*, Routledge, London, 1998, pp. 1-16.

⁷ Daniel BARBU, *Republica absentă*, cit., p. 168. See also Cristian PREDA, Sorina SOARE, *Regimul, partidele și sistemul politic...cit.*, pp. 96-103.

reforms but also due to an indirect threshold based on the district magnitude, became the main referential in the public debates during the years 2000s¹. Analogously, even if benefiting from reduced media coverage, the local electoral system reforms imposed even more drastic changes.

Main explicative variable for the party system nationalisation process, the electoral system design cannot entirely account for changes in the territorial patterns of voting behaviour. Although when compared to other post-communist democracies, the majority effects of the Romanian electoral systems constitute an important element in explaining the low levels of nationalisation, the micro level analysis of the electoral choices tend to infer an opposite situation. The evolution of the Romanian electoral regulations followed a path from a pure proportional formula towards more majority system effects without decreasing the levels of party nationalisation. If in Russia or Ukraine the presence of single seat districts has been quoted as a decisive explanation for low party system nationalisation², the Romanian electoral regulations, implying the existence of single-seat colleges, pinpoint to neutral effects of this electoral change. Moreover, the last local elections' results suggested that in mayoral elections, following the majority formula, there is more homogeneity than in the County councils' elections (organised on a proportional representation formula).

This paradoxical situation, implying the lack of electoral regulations' impact on the parties' territorial support is the direct result of a narrow definition of the institutional arrangements. The neutral effects or sometimes even *counterintuitive* consequences of the electoral laws can be understood by taking a closer look to the transformations occurred in party rules and wider institutional arrangements. If in the early 90s the legislators decided to adopt an inclusive solution in defining a political party, requiring only 251 members, by 2003 the minimum number of the party members for the official registration raised to 25 000 members³. The 2003 law consecrates one of the most restrictive regulations on parties in Europe (with the exception of Russia). The bill clearly mentioned the compulsory nature of the parties' territorial basis, by stating that the organisations should display lists of support counting at least 700 members in 18 counties (representing 42% of the overall number of constituencies)⁴. Performance criteria have been introduced as parties were compelled to show that they were able not only to gather signatures from their sympathisers, but also to have good electoral records during the last two electoral processes either in local or general elections (by winning at least 50 000 votes). These exclusive electoral provisions constitute favouring elements in explaining along with the electoral threshold the clarification of the Romanian political scene. At the same time, the intensive codification highlighting the importance of local credentials expressed both in electoral support and party reach within the territorial units contributed to an adjustment of party politics in what concerns the grassroots organisations. The local presence became in this way an

¹ Jean Benoit PILET, J.M. DE WAELE, "Electoral Reforms in Romania...cit.", p. 71.

² Daniel BOCHSLER, "The Nationalisation of Post-communist Party Systems", cit., p. 817.

³ For an in-depth analysis of these transformations see Cristian PREDA, *Partide și alegeri în România postcomunistă: 1989-2004*, Nemira, București, 2005; IDEM, *România postcomunistă și România interbelică*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 2002.

⁴ Alexandra IONAȘCU, Sorina SOARE, "Le financement des partis politiques et leurs transformations organisationnelles. Un aperçu du cas roumain", *Transitions*, vol. 52, 2012 (forthcoming).

imperative for party official recognition, being rewarded at the same by additional stipulations on the financial incentives offered in exchange for good local electoral scores.

The electoral and party reforms in the Romanian case testify of the constant quest for extensive codification of the party-voters connections. If the first electoral reforms introduced rather non-representative effects, the adoption of single member colleges, trademark for a majority effect was presented as the willingness of party representatives' to institute stronger personal links with their constituents. In fact, the 2008 reform can be read as a way of solidifying previously instituted party regulations referring to the importance of local organisations and local linkages. Paradoxically, these complementary measures are neutralising each other and their effects on the party system nationalisation. On the one side, the electoral laws constitute incentives for less party nationalisation, while the parties' extensive regulations advocate for consolidating local branches' influence in what concerns the electoral support and the size of the local party organisations.

Party Organisational Development: An Alternative Explanation of Citizens' Choices

Historical heritage, late modernisation and difficulties in the articulation of cleavages played important roles in the emergent parties' development. The electoral profile of the country¹, notably the social-economic differences favoured more or less homogenous electoral support. Nevertheless, in the CEE countries party systems' stabilisation has been a party-driven process. The regularity framework of the party competition and the creation of the stable party roots within society² characterising the party system institutionalisation become main elements in explaining the clarification of the electoral choices. However, only these two criteria cannot account for the diversity of the Romanian parties' individual trajectories. Considering political parties as chains of delegation between voters, candidates and officeholders³, the individual party institutionalisation on a structural dimension (regarding the reinforcement of a well trained personnel and party loyalists⁴) acquires an important explicative role for the integrative electoral behaviour. Resulting from this, the territorial uniformities in the voting patterns can be read as parties' efforts to adapt to new democratic settings, depending on the party leaders' capacity in dealing with the environmental

¹ Dumitru SANDU, *Spațiul social al tranziției*, Polirom, Iași, 1999; Dragoș DRAGOMAN, "Geografia electorală a României în 2004. Modernitate economică și neo-dependență rurală", in IDEM (ed.), *Alegeri și alegători în România 2000-2004. Contexte locale și regionale*, Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga" Sibiu, Sibiu, 2006, pp. 9-52.

² Scott MAINWARING, Timothy SCULLY, *Building Democratic Institutions: Party Systems in Latin America*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1995, pp. 3-37.

³ Kay LAWSON, "When Linkage Fails", in Kay LAWSON, Peter H. MERKEL (eds.), *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, pp. 13-38.

⁴ Vicky RANDALL, Lars SVASAND, "Party Institutionalization and the New Democracies", *Party Politics*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2002, pp. 5-29.

challenges¹. In what follows the voters choices are treated as direct replies to parties' strategies and organisational development².

The Local Organisations Articulation: Party Grassroots

In the development of post-communist parties, their adaptation to the democratising environment as their capacity to reflect and to cope with internal diversity constituted the main function of the organisational arrangements³. The initial top down creation of these political actors as their failure in consolidating strong local branches and high membership rolls⁴ were conducive during the transition years towards the homogenisation of their organisational and electoral frailty. Although in consolidated democracies political parties were questioned in what concerns their abilities to represent citizens and to preserve active party organisations and members⁵, scholars do tend to agree on the fact that voters-party ties and party identification are strong incentives in gathering electoral support. Powerful grassroots, the presence of active voices acting as linkages with the electorate were portrayed as the sole factor encouraging stable electoral support and strong party branches.

High discrepancies describe the party grassroots characteristics' both in old and new democratic settings. The impressive membership drops registered in the last three decades are present in almost all the contemporary democracies⁶. In this general context, the Romanian and the Bulgarian cases were identified as outliers⁷. If in the early 90s, despite the salient divide between the ex-communist and post-communist

¹ Krister LUNDELL, "Determinants of Candidate Selection. The Degree of Centralisation in Comparative Perspective", *Party Politics*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2004, pp. 25-47.

² Nick SITTER, "Cleavages, Party Strategy and Party System Change in Europe, East and West", *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2002, p. 447.

³ Maurice DUVERGER, *Les partis politiques*, Librairie Armand Collin, Paris, 1976; F. BOUCEK, "Rethinking Factionalism Typologies, Intra-Party Dynamics and Three Faces of Factionalism", *Party Politics*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2009, pp. 455-485/p. 475.

⁴ Pascal DELWIT, "Still in Decline? Party Membership in Europe", in Emilie VAN HAUTE (ed.), *Party Membership in Europe: Exploration into the Anthills of Party Politics*, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, 2011, pp. 25-42.

⁵ Hans DAALDER, "Parties: Denied, Dismissed, or Redundant? A Critique", in Richard GUNTHER, Jose RAMON-MONTERO, Juan J. LINZ (eds.), *Political Parties: Old Concepts and New Challenges*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2002, pp. 39-57. See also Richard S KATZ, Peter MAIR, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party", *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 1995, pp. 5-28.

⁶ Ingrid VAN BIEZEN, Peter MAIR, "Party Membership in Twenty European Democracies, 1980-2000", *Party Politics*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2001, pp. 5-21; Ingrid VAN BIEZEN, Peter MAIR, Thomas POGUNTKE, "Going, Going, . . . Gone? The Decline of Party Membership in Contemporary Europe", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2012, pp. 24-56; Paul G. LEWIS, "Political Parties", in Stephen WHITE, Judy BATT, Paul G. LEWIS (eds.), *Developments in Central and East European Politics*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2003, pp. 153-172. See also Aleks SZCZERBIAK, "Party Structure and Organisation in Post-Communist Poland", *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2001, pp. 94-130; IDEM, "The New Polish Political Parties as Membership Organizations", *Contemporary Politics*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2001, pp. 57-69.

⁷ Maria SPIROVA, "Political Parties in Bulgaria. Organizational Trends in Comparative Perspective" *Party Politics*, vol. 11, no. 5, 2005, pp. 601-622/p. 606; For the 2000-2007 period see

representatives, political parties did indeed share a trait of weak implantation in society¹, this pattern has soon been abandoned. The official party records in Romania showed that in 2003 – 10.15% of the voters were also party members (12.31% if we are to include the UDMR), in 2007 – 6.78% (8.7% with UDMR) and in 2011 – 6.87% (7.74%). Representing rather rough estimates of the party membership bases, these figures portray the Romanian parties as strong party organisations. Even if these overall numbers are not describing only the parliamentary parties' membership structure, the inflation of party members became a constant presence of the Romanian politics (see the appended Table). Opposing the mass structure of the social democrats (1996 – 250 000 members, 2003 – 385 481, 2007 – 290 116, 2011 – 409 833) and the UDMR (1996 – 410 000, 2003 – 400 000, 2007 – 350 000, 2011 – 160 700²) that maintained high membership structures during the whole period, to the other post-communist parties: the liberals (2003 – 73 185, 2007 – 116 134, 2011 – 131 908) and the democrats (1997 – 135 288, 2003 – 148 922, 2007 – 86 461, 2011 – 86 817), the general anatomy of the Romanian parties suggest the emergence of important membership rolls as favouring elements for stable party electorates³.

The above mentioned official records are not complete lists of all the party members. According to the Romanian regulations the parties are compelled to abide by the minimum criterion specified in the party regulations. Nevertheless, a general analysis of the members' nationalisation scores in 2007 and 2011 suggest that Romanian parties display unequal territorial distribution of their officially registered members. If the social-democrats during the recent years increased the homogeneity of their local organisations' strength (the membership nationalisation score touched 0.82, similar to the party nationalisation index), the liberals (0.77), but especially the democrats' (0.52) public records suggest an electoral strategy based on strongholds. Even though, in the absence of party members' constituency data an in-depth analysis cannot be conducted for the entire post-communist period, these recent trends suggest that regardless of party organisational strategies, the homogeneity of the electoral support for parties in the territorial units is not directly dependent on the local implantation of these organisations.

Conversely, the thesis of a direct relationship between party finance and membership structure of political parties is a more suitable explanation for these unusual levels of participation to the party life. During the 2000s, the Romanian parties were more reliant on subscription fees and private donations (indirectly linked

Sorina SOARE, Alexandra IONAȘCU, "Cultivating Large Membership Rolls: The Romanian Case", in Emilie Van HAUTE, (ed), *Party Membership in Europe...cit.*, pp. 61-77.

¹ Tom GALLAGHER, "The Emergence of New Party Systems and Transitions to Democracy: Romania and Portugal Compared", in G. PRIDHAM, P. LEWIS, (eds.), *Stabilising Fragile Democracies: Comparing New Party Systems in Southern and Eastern Europe*, Routledge, New York, 1996, pp. 206-229/p. 219.

² Data generously provided by the party to Sorina Soare.

³ For the 1996/1997 period see Alexandru VOICU, "Party Organizations and Political Recruitment, The Case of Romania", *ECPR Summer School on Parties and Party Systems*, EUI, Florence, 10-21 September 2007. For UDMR see Reka HORVATH, *La représentation politique de la minorité hongroise de Roumanie: l'Alliance Démocrate Hongroise de Roumanie*, thesis defended at ULB. The data for PDSR are extracted from party documents. See also Alexandra IONAȘCU, "Les partis politiques roumains. L'histoire d'un développement inattendu", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. VIII, no. 3, 2008, pp. 589-623; Alexandra IONAȘCU, Sorina SOARE, "Cultivating Large Membership Rolls...cit.", pp. 61-77.

to party members) than on state subventions¹. Moreover, the differences between the symbolic low value of simple members' subscriptions and the fee paid by party leaders and public officials can suggest an organisational tradition of concealing the party elite character by maintaining the impression of large organisations. In this regard, an alternative/complementary explanation can also be formulated. The low levels of membership dues for the ordinary members constitute incentives to participate to the party life and activities². Contrary to this, the high subscriptions fees required for the party officials can be interpreted as implicit barriers in the participation to internal party contests for elected or appointed positions.

Party Candidates: The Electoral Personalisation of Parties

The Romanian organisational behaviour follows a pattern of "Americanisation". The highly volatile party membership records are similar with the voter registration process in the US, depending on the electoral timeline or legislative constraints. The analysis of the party grassroots as main factors ensuring a direct relationship with voters in different constituencies does not suggest the existence of a correlation between membership distribution in different constituencies and uniform patterns of electoral support. Nevertheless a more indirect explanation can be hypothesised. While the intra party discontent and the articulation of party factions characterised all the post communist parties, the successful organisational constructions were the ones in which the internal conflicts were pondered by a reasonable appreciation of the promotion procedures and party activities³. The candidate selection for public offices constitutes a manner of rewarding party loyalists⁴. At the same time, the recruitment procedures are also an *ex ante* mechanism of screening the future officeholders⁵ in order to prevent political unreliability. The institutionalisation of democratic practices within parties⁶, implying inclusive candidacy and selectorates but also a decentralisation process can account for homogenous electoral support through the territorial units. The mobilisation of local organisations in selecting party leaders, a balanced representation of public officials according to a territorial dimension can explain the uniformity of the citizens' electoral choices. Following this thesis, the formal party arrangements and party practices inflict on local party organisations

¹ See Alexandra IONAȘCU, Sorina SOARE, "Le financement des partis politiques...cit."

² Reuven Y. HAZAN, Gideon RAHAT, *Democracy within Parties Candidate Selection Methods and Their Political Consequences*, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 43.

³ Jean Michel DE WAELE, Alexandra IONAȘCU, "Les Partis Politiques en Europe Centrale et Orientale. L'organisation interne des partis politiques a-t-elle encore de l'importance?", *Transitions*, vol. XLVIII, no. 1, 2008, pp. 5-11.

⁴ Angelo PANEBIANCO, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 36, 39, 43.

⁵ Thomas SAALFELD, "Members of the Parliament and Governments in Western Europe: Agency Relations and Problems of Oversight", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2000, pp. 353-376.

⁶ Reuven Y. HAZAN, Gideon RAHAT, *Democracy within Parties Candidate Selection...cit*, p. 18. See also IDEM, "Candidate Selection Methods and Consequences", in Richard KATZ, William CROTTY (eds.), *Handbook of Party Politics*, Sage, London, 2006, pp. 109-122; Lars BILLIE, "Democratizing A Democratic Procedure? Myth and Reality? Candidate Selection in Western European Parties", *Party Politics*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2001, pp. 363-380.

and on the role of different party layers in relating to the general public, and thus ultimately in gathering voters' support.

The formal party arrangements¹ stipulate in all the statutory provisions the party members' right to candidate for a leadership position. The internal selection process varies in the degree of inclusiveness in what concerns the party members' participation to the internal selection contests (organisations that are called to propose or to vote for the candidates), but also fluctuated constantly in what concerns the degree of decentralisation (the level where the final list of candidates is decided)². In the early 90s all the political parties presented centralised patterns of internal recruitment. The national leadership had the final saying in what concerns the candidate selection. Nevertheless, 10 years after the fall of communism different patterns of recruitment occurred. Such an example is represented by the liberals in 2002 that adopted for several years an internal procedure introducing a "meritocratic criterion". The party leadership had the right of establishing the candidates' lists for the local branches with poor electoral performances. Meanwhile, the national leadership only validated the lists of candidates formulated by the local organisations displaying local electoral results above the national average. This decision that preceded the adoption of party finance regulations (advocating the importance of local electoral results in establishing the state subventions) rapidly contributed to the development of local party branches. In the cases of two other parties, other selection mechanisms were tested. The UDMR (1995) and PSD (2003) have chosen at different moments in time to introduce more inclusive structures in the general definition of their selectorate. Consequently, the closed primaries system was implemented. This measure was applied only once in the PSD's case (2/3 of the candidates resulted from this type of direct elections) and it became, until recently, fully implemented in the case of the UDMR. At the opposite end, the democrats presented the most centralised system of selection, as the national leaders were the ones constructing the party lists. These general provisions were doubled by highly exclusive definitions of candidacy. Party seniority and party activity in recruiting new members were some of the formal requirements adopted in order to be selected or appointed in official positions.

The post-communist parties displayed numerous internal designs. However, their continuous reconfigurations were primarily linked either to extensive centralisation or to high levels of inclusiveness (primary systems). These two antithetical (extreme) choices were considered at the level of the literature as determinants for national party leadership continuity and insulation of local party leaders³. The local and middle levels elites' impairment is known to hamper the creation of party strongholds, annulling the local parties' organisations impact on voters' choices, and thus creating the premises of uniform voting patterns. However, these recruitment procedures are partially misleading. In order to institute a functional organisational pattern they are supposed to last for a while without major amendments. The frequent reconfigurations

¹ For a detailed analysis of statutory evolutions see Alexandra IONAȘCU, "Les partis politiques roumains...cit.", pp. 589-623.

² Gideon RAHAT, "Candidate Selection: The Choice Before the Choice", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2007, pp. 157-170.

³ Richard KATZ, "The Problem of Candidate Selection and Models of Party Democracy", *Party Politics*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2001, pp. 277-296.

of the internal party regulations, from one party convention/Congress to another, introduced organisational unpredictability circumventing the consecration of clear logics of career pathways to power or stable structures of incentives. Furthermore, starting with 2008, a new development was introduced. Without being codified in the parties' statutory provisions, the main political competitors defined a new candidate selection procedure based on opinion polls. Considered to be one of the most inclusive and decentralised process of selection¹, because it implies voters' choices prior to the elections this mechanism remained however a retrospective method of validating initial party choices. In this case, the size of the selectorate and the candidacy dimensions were rather unexplained. Nevertheless, as Katz suggested for all forms of party primaries, the extreme inclusiveness in the selection process constitute good ways of promoting the already known public figures, and thus in consolidating the status quo.

The general trend towards broadening the participation of the party members and the pursuit of publicising the appearance of more democratic patterns of selection are not sufficient in order to estimate the party branches' role in mobilising votes. Although it has been argued that inclusive mechanisms of selection and decision making within parties encourage political participation² and good public images, the adoption of such mechanisms is meaningless when it does not produce representativeness effects. Or in the Romanian case, in spite of different party arrangements, these procedures did not imply a pervasive process of selection, nor did it create different outcomes in the general profile of parties representatives in public offices. In fact, the officeholders' career patterns reveal a remarkable instability which is challenged only by the importance of local credentials and incumbency. For instance, although the lack of previous experience in the political field remains a constant in the MPs selection, the local resources constitute a vital asset for their promotion in eligible positions/colleges: in 1990 – 20.86%, in 1992 – 19.66%, 1996 – 16.32%, 2000 – 30.44%³ and 36.4% in 2004-2008 of the Romanian deputies were benefiting from a previous political experience at county or local level. These general figures suggest the increasing role of local organisations in the candidate selection or at least the importance of local credentials for candidacy within all the Romanian parties. At the same time, the high incumbency levels represented a constant of the post-communist period. In Chamber of Deputies: 1992-1996 29% of the elected MPs were former members of the Parliament, in 1996-2000 – 34% were incumbents, 39% were displaying a similar profile in 2000-2004, while 42% of the Romanian deputies had shared a similar experience in the previous legislative terms. Slightly higher percentages are also displayed by the party senators. These overall percentages are however hiding a strong party variation. While the UDMR and PSD exhibit gradual trends in increasing the reselection of their former MPs, other political parties show sinuous trends, also resulting from the variability of their electoral performances. For example in the Chamber of Deputies the PNL had 24% re-elected incumbents in 1996, 70% in 2000 and 26.56% in 2004, while PD/PDL had 90% incumbents in 1992, around 70% in 1996 and 2000, but only 33% in 2004-2008 legislature. According to

¹ Reuven Y. HAZAN, Gideon RAHAT, *Democracy within Parties Candidate Selection...cit.*, p. 41.

² Gideon RAHAT, "Candidate Selection...cit.", p. 166.

³ Laurențiu ȘTEFAN, *Patterns of Political Recruitment*, Ziua, București, 2004, p. 217.

these data, the parliamentary parties appeared to have indirectly narrowed down the inclusiveness of the selection process¹, without however neglecting the role of local constituencies.

Similarly, in the cases of the governmental elites, the local credentials started to play an important role, particularly in the recent times. Phenomenon introduced by PD in 1996-2000, developed during the last years of the social-democratic government (2003-2004), the importance of ministers' regional background became a new criterion of selection. Resulting from this, during 2004-2008 governmental term one quarter of the Romanian ministers were exhibiting local political credentials, and 59% of them were also leaders of local party organisations². A slower pace in imposing local credential is also identifiable in the junior ministers' case. In during 2000-2008, 7% these executive actors were former local leaders. Although the mobility between local and national levels is reduced, numerous public statements by the end of 2000s announced the cooption in governmental teams of junior ministers recommended by the local branches leadership. This recent pattern follows a wider trend of crystallising informal criteria for the governmental portfolios. The reappointment procedures both in ministerial and junior minister positions remained high during the whole period. In the creation of the governmental teams in 1996-1998 20% of the ministers had already accumulated a previous executive experience, during 2000-2004 their number represented 35% of the members in the cabinet while in 2004-2008 around one quarter of the ministers shared this type of political profile.

It appears thus that although the party internal arrangements have evolved towards inclusive electorates and stable candidacy definitions', in what concerns the recruitment outcomes the general profile displayed by the party officeholders emphasizes a general process of exclusiveness on these two axes. Contrary to the hypothesis of a stratarchical construction of politics in a nationalised political system, the parties' recruitment strategies' suggest an opposite trend: notably the regionalisation of national politics that follows the homogenisation the voters' choices within the territorial units. Although the party organisations are not genuinely democratising, the remedy for organisational instability in Romanian politics could be exactly the competitive strategy developed by local representatives willing to colonise the national level. This behavioural element implies two elements: 1. the different formal mechanisms adopted within parties tend to conduce to similar outcomes in the selection of candidates; 2. the nationalisation of politics is not to be considered a sign of party decline, but instead the outcome of active mechanisms of promotion. In this case, the decentralisation without internal democratisation describing the recruitment process can explain local branches' lobby in order to gain key positions in national politics. This competitive structure of patronage incentives resulting from candidate selection methods can partially explain the parties' homogenous electoral support within the territorial units.

¹ Reuven Y. HAZAN, Gideon RAHAT, *Democracy within Parties Candidate Selection...*cit., pp. 27-30.

² Alexandra IONAȘCU, *Les élites et la prise de décision gouvernementale. Considérations sur le cas roumain*, thesis defended at Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2008, p. 188. See the same references for the governmental trajectories in the following section.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: EXPLAINING TERRITORIAL REPRESENTATION IN ROMANIA

The electoral scene in the CEE democracies suggests a general phenomenon of convergence in patterns with the Western counterparts in what concerns the territorialisation of politics. Soon after the breakdown of communism and resulting from different reasons, the voters' behaviour did not unveil high discrepancies across the counties. In this general framework, the Romanian case suggested different electoral pathways. Resulting from the exponential development of the Romanian party politics and the lack of partisan articulation in the early 90s, the regional differences diminished over the last twenty years.

The nationalisation process which occurred accompanied however different institutional regulations, suggesting that the process of nationalisation is taking place against some of the denationalisations' determinants. First, the electoral reforms conducing towards more majority effects during the last twenty years did not entail regional patterns in the voting choices. A possible explanation for this situation is the fact that only the electoral system is not sufficient in order to explain, from an institutional perspective, the party system nationalisation levels. A second dimension regarding party regulations should be introduced. Indeed, in the Romanian case, the political leaders' choices to adopt "majority" rules, following their quest for stability and party system clarification were doubled by restrictive measures, forcing political parties to develop within the territorial units and thus to cultivate local strongholds. The coercive measure concerning territorial party representation was doubled by selective incentives in party finance procedures and blurred control over party revenues based on membership fees.

The electoral system design and the regionalisation of national politics can account for some of the differences encountered between the Romanian party nationalisation scores and the other countries in the region. Despite the high membership rolls, the volatility of party members and the decreased mobilisation in the case of the parliamentary parties' grassroots, coupled with the low turnouts suggest a rather different electoral phenomenon. Furthermore, the unbalanced distribution of party members within constituencies suggests that high enrolment figures cannot account for homogeneous voters' support. From this perspective, it will be rather the disenchantment with politics, and the lack of public trust, the main elements that are conducive towards the electoral results' nationalisation. The limitations introduced by the legislative regulations reduced the number of parties, and resulting from this, limited voters' choices. This idea seems to be supported by the analysis of the local party scores. With the exception of ethnic voting, no major regional differences were identified between the territorial units, and this, although there are important historical and cultural differences between regions. Additionally, the diversity of local branches' membership structures is not necessarily a sign of these actors' influence on the national organisation. Paradoxically, no matter the selection patterns within party organisations: through party primaries, hyper centralised recruitment, or meritocratic criteria, all parties exhibit a surprisingly homogenous profile of their leaders. Two main variables seem to matter, the local credentials and incumbency. Contrary to this, the overall tendency towards the exclusive outcomes of the recruitment process suggests that although parties are far from democratising, they are however decentralising. The coherent internal politics of supporting territorial representation

for the appointed and selected positions suggest direct and indirect effects of the local connections in building up national politics.

When referring to national politics, decentralisation has been conceived as an incentive towards denationalisation. However, in what concerns party politics the local officeholders' presence on the national arena doubled by the incumbency factor points towards the opposite direction. In fact, the increased nationalisation factor of political parties can be the outcome of the regionalisation of national politics. The formal and informal predominance of local barons in the general economy of party politics suggest a reverse process of colonisation through which the local "strongholds" gained the control over the national offices, and this, contrary to the continuous party internal rearrangements that tried to limit this effect.

APPENDIX

Table 1*Voting Turnout in General Elections in CEE Countries 1990-2010*

	Bulgaria	Czech R.	Poland	Romania	Slovakia	Slovenia
1990-1991	83.87	96.33	43.20	86.19	96.33	
1992-1995	75.23	84.68	52.08	76.29	84.68/75.4	85.52
1996-1999	58.87	76.29/74	47.93	76.01	84.25	75.75
2000-2003	66.63	57.95	46.18	65.31	70.07	72.33
2004-2006	55.76	64.47	40.57	58.51	54.67	61.09
2007-2010	60.64	62.60	53.88	39.20	58.84	65.04

Source: International Idea Supporting Democracy WorldWide

http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm?CountryCode=BG (last accessed on November 2011)
Table 2*Party System and Turnout Nationalisation in Romania: General and European Elections*

Year	ELECTIONS	Party Nationalisation		Turnout Nationalisation	
		stand PNS	weighted PNS	stand TNS	weighted TNS
1992	Chamber of Deputies	0.65	0.58	0.97	0.96
1996	Chamber of Deputies	0.63	0.46	0.98	0.97
2000	Chamber of Deputies	0.69	0.52	0.98	0.97
2004	Chamber of Deputies	0.74	0.69	0.98	0.98
2007	European Parliament	0.74	0.66	0.95	0.93
2008	Chamber of Deputies	0.79	0.65	0.95	0.93
2009	European Parliament	0.79	0.73	0.89	0.84

Sources: National Electoral Bureau * Weighted with district sizes; controlling for districts with larger number of parties than at national level (Daniel BOCHSLER, "The Nationalization of Political Parties...cit."). (In order to calculate the Party Nationalisation Score see <http://www.unige.ch/ses/spo/staff/corpsinter/bochsler/pns>, last accessed on October 2011)

Table 3
Party Nationalisation in Romania General and European Elections

		PD/PDL		PNL		PRM		PSD		UDMR		CDR	
		%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS
1992	CDEP	10.2	0.84	2.63	0.87	3.9	0.84	27.7	0.80	7.5	0.35	20	0.85
1996	CDEP	12.93	0.89	In CDR		4.46	0.86	21.52	0.82	6.64	0.33	30.17	0.88
2000	CDEP	7.03	0.85	6.89	0.86	19.48	0.86	36.61	0.86	6.80	0.33	5.04	0.79
2004	CDEP	31.81* 0.90(Justice and Truth)				13.65	0.91	36.80	0.90	6.23	0.33	1.96*	0.72
2007	PE	28,81	0.90	13,44	0.88	4,15	0.91	23,11	0.87	5,52	0.38		
2008	CDEP	32,36	0.91	18,57	0.88	3.15	na	33,09	0.89	6,17	0.33		
2009	PE	29,71	0.89	14,52	0.88	8,65	0.86	31,07	0.88	8,92	0.34		

*Only the PNTCD case the main party of the CDR during the 90s %VVE =Percentage of Votes, PNS=Party Nationalisation Score.

Table 4
Party System and Turnout Nationalisation in Romania: Local Elections

Year	ELECTIONS	Party Nationalisation				Turnout Nationalisation	
		Chibber/ Kollman	Allik	Stand PNS	weighted PNS	Stand PNS	weighted PNS
1996	Mayors	1.15	0.83 (0.69*)	0.58	0.50	0.97	0.96
	County Council	1.81	0.84(0.70*)	0.58	0.46		
2000	Mayors	1.21	0.85 (0.77*)	0.62	0.55	0.96	0.95
	County Council	1.04	0.89 (0.70*)	0.63	0.52		
2004	Mayors	0.40	0.92 (0.74*)	0.66	0.60	0.97	0.96
	County Council	0.45	0.92(0.78*)	0.69	0.69		
2008	Mayors	0.69	0.85(0.80*)	0.73	0.67	0.97	0.96
	County Council	0.42	0.92 (0.80*)	0.66	0.65		

Table 5
Party Nationalisation in Romania General and European Elections

		PDL		PNL/PL93		PRM		PSD		UDMR		CDR	
		%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS	%VVE	PNS
96	Mayoral	13.11	0.70	2.65*		1.44	0.83	26.28	0.82	4.18	0.24	26.27	0.77
	County Council	11.27	0.85	2.81*	0.82	4.03	0.84	16.28	0.85	7.06	0.31	19.53	0.84
00	Mayoral	12.89	0.84	8.40	0.81	2.80	0.80	36.74	0.86	4.29	0.29	10.10	0.78
	County Council	9.91	0.85	6.96	0.83	6.62	0.85	27.44	0.85	6.27	0.31	7.47	0.84
04	Mayoral	15.00	0.79	17.20	0.81	3.39	0.86	41.83	0.85	4.06	0.26	1.58*	0.64
	County Council	12.79	0.89	15.99	0.91	8.10	0.89	32.71	0.89	5.67	0.33	2.27*	na
08	Mayoral	30,46	0.88	19,36	0.85	2,57	0.86	28,03	0.79	4,27	0.28	0,96	
	County Council	28,91	0.88	18,21	0.82	3,75	0.86	27,97	0.87	5,14	0.33	1,05	

PNS: Party nationalisation score; %VVE = Percentage of Votes

Table 6
The Evolution of Legislative Framework Regarding Party and Elections in Romania

	PARTY ORGANISATION	PARTY FINANCE	ELECTORAL SYSTEM	LOCAL ELECTORAL SYSTEM
1990/1991	Registered parties: statute, party program, headquarter, the financial means and 251 members	– Declaration on the party finance sources; local elections: the foreign financing is prohibited. No other restrictions. – in 1992: state subsidies for parties that won more than 5% of the votes in legislative elections	PR closed lists in multimember constituencies, the redistribution of the largest remainders method, no electoral threshold + representatives of national minorities; (1992) 3% electoral threshold	Local council – PR closed lists. Mayors – directly elected two round electoral system. County Council Indirect Selection
1996	– 10 000 members, in 15 counties (not less than 300 persons/ county). – candidates in 10 constituencies every two parliamentary elections or a general assembly every 5 years	Four main sources: membership fees, donations, own activities, state subsidies. <i>Membership fees</i> : - no limitations (cannot be higher than 10 salaries). <i>State subsidies</i> : parties with a parliamentary group + additional sums proportional to the no. of mandates (some financing if obtained more than 2% of votes in the general elections)	threshold + representatives of national minorities; (1992) 3% electoral threshold	1996: County Council directly elected : PR closed lists
2000			2000: electoral threshold for local and County council: 5% for parties, 8-10% coalition (depending on the size of coalition)	

2003	<p>– 25 000 members in 18 counties but not less than 700 in each territorial unit.</p> <p>– candidates in</p>	<p>Subscriptions: no more than 48 salaries</p> <p>– State subsidies: the parties that promote women -> higher state subsidies (% mandates)</p> <p>General formula = 75% (proportionally to the no/of votes of parliamentary parties) + 25% (proportionally with the no of votes in the local elections)</p>		2006: Political migration of mayors is sanctioned (automatic resignation)
2008	<p>18 counties in the legislative elections and 50 000 votes in 2 subsequent electoral contests no matter the nature of the elections: local or national</p>	<p>Some restrictions in amount of donations during an electoral year (when several electoral processes are organised)</p>	<p>PR mixed electoral system in multimember constituencies, 452 single-member colleges. (the candidates that win over 50% of the votes obtain a mandate). An alternative threshold – if 6 deputies or 3 senators win the elections</p>	<p>The direct election of County Presidents (one round majority system)</p>

Table 7

Party Grassroots. Party Members and their Evolution in Romania

		MEMBERS	% DUES	DUES/ STATE	M/E	PNMB	TERRIT. COVERAGE
PNL	2003	73185	19.82	0.44	0.41	NA	NA
	2007	116134	19.61	1.81	0.63	0.77	98.51%
	2011	131908	55.36	3.28	0.72	0.76	93.09%
PSD	1997	250000	NA	NA	1.45	NA	NA
	2003	385481	56.08	3.20	2.18	NA	NA
	2007	290116	44.5	1.95	1.59	0.78	100.00%
	2011	409833	54.92	1.57	2.25	0.82	98.73%
PDL	1997	135288	NA	NA	0.79	NA	NA
	2003	148922	9.34	0.26	0.84	NA	NA
	2007	86461	15.06	1.44	0.47	0.46	49.08%
	2011	86817	38.13	1.91	0.48	0.52	73.36%

PRM	2003	201827	16.94	0.23	1.14	NA	NA
	2007	103548	0.24	0.002	0.57	0.72	95.33%
	2011	78943	NA	NA	0.43	0.69	89.00%
UDMR	1997	410000	NA	NA	2.38	NA	NA
	2003	400000	19.85	0.76	2.26	NA	NA
	2007	350000	13.44	2.12	1.9	NA	NA
	2011	160700	3.27**	0.03	0.88	NA	NA
		Members 2003	M/E 2003	Members 2007	M/E 2007	Members 2011	M/E 2011
Total (parliamentary parties)		904729	4.9	779735	4.28	731284	3.99
Overall membership figures		1871933	10.15	1235873	6.78	1259957	6.87
Overall membership figures (+UDMR)		2271933	12.31	1585873	8.7	1420657	7.74

% Dues = % of party incomes resulting from membership fees, DUES/State = ratio between party incomes originating from membership fees/state subsidies; M/E=party membership/electoral body; PNMB- the nationalisation of membership rolls (county level) ** Data for 2010